# Bibliography of African Literatures

Peter Limb and Jean-Marie Volet

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## INTRODUCTION

The need for a comprehensive bibliographical survey of African literatures has never been more apparent. The successes of Nobel Laureates Naguib Mahfuz of Egypt, Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, and Nadine Gordimer of South Africa ensure that no longer can the rich and varied creative writings of Africa be ignored. The broad Africa-wide and international fame of other writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Nawal al-Saadawi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aïdoo, Mongo Beti, Werewere Liking, or Sembène Ousmane, to name just a few, is testimony to the growing popularity of African writers. However, much of their output is imperfectly documented. Perhaps the most impressive attempt to comprehensively chronicle African literature, that of H. Zell, Carol Bundy and Virginia Coulon, is now 12 years old, and even this work neglected North Africa with its wealth of Arabic literature, Afrikaans, and many other languages.<sup>1</sup>

This work brings together books by major established and new literary writers of the continent and diaspora. The main emphasis of the book is on literatures in English and French, but some in Portuguese, Arabic, and other various major African languages also are included. All countries and literary genres are covered. Themes treated in the bibliography include African women writers, writers with socio-political themes, and post-colonial literature. This work fills a gap in the subject literature occasioned by the explosion of publishing of African writers and provides both a ready-reference to African authors and a detailed, in-depth coverage of the most significant and interesting writers to emerge in

recent decades.

The number of books published by African authors has increased at an exponential rate over the last decade. So too has secondary literature, and that alone would make any attempt to produce a comprehensive bibliography impossible. Yet, there is another and arguably bigger obstacle on the road to exhaustivity, that is the contemporary dismissal of universal values and the subjectivity of past criteria allowing the distinction between the "good" writers from the "bad," or the "écrivains" from the "écrivants," the canonic from the mundane, the dilemma of writing in "international"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> H. Zell, C. Bundy, and V. Coulon, A New Reader's Guide to African Literature. London: Heinemann, 1983.

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